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No Safety Gear: *Skate Girl Space* and the Regeneration of Australian Community-Based Performance

In one of the rare comic skits presented on the otherwise uninspiring Australian television parody "Fast Forward," a young man stands in court awaiting his sentence for a criminal offence. It is likely that the man will be handed a community service order or a jail term. After stern deliberation the judge sentences the offender to "200 hours of community theater." This play on the common parlance *200 hours of community service* is accompanied by great gales of recorded studio laughter and, one may presume, similarly audible sighs of resignation from former community theater practitioners across the country. . . . What has become the current public perception of community theater in Australia? Does it have relevance or a future when tired models of practice become the object of derision and a test of endurance for audiences?

The death-knell for a certain emblematic style of community theater has been sounding in Australia for quite some time. In a 1993 essay provocatively titled "Wanted (Presumed Dead): Community Theatre in Victoria," Geoffrey Milne lamented the disappearance of professional theater for, by, and about communities in the Australian state of Victoria, which at that time was being socially and culturally ravaged by its government's overtly economic-rationalist priorities.[1] Likewise throughout Australia, community theater's demise has been framed by funding agency agendas, and it has been well documented how government prerogatives have determined both the

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mortality rate of community-based companies and the life expectancy of new approaches.[2]

Practitioners of the 1980s boom of community theater have become particularly disillusioned with notions of voice, identity, and representation in community-based performance as the foundations of "community" have become increasingly unstable in Australia's linguistically and culturally diverse society. And, as David Watt's description of the "celebratory epic" suggests, when these shifting boundaries of (and allegiances to) community become too time- and money-consuming to negotiate, a glossy street parade-style of community theater is the preferred option for arts practitioners and funding agencies.[3] As a result, in the 1990s the very definition of *community theater* finds itself at the mercy of an obsessively cautious, and in many cases banal, model of practice. As for any critique of an aesthetics of community-based performance, postmodern suspicions of a perceived reliance on authentic voices and boundaried communities have discouraged the kind of vigorous attention and debate that this field—which was formerly so important a mode of social criticism and political action—should deserve.

In his study of British community-based performance, *Theatre and Everyday Life,* Alan Read declares that community arts and political theater are outmoded forms of reference that "limit thought to partitioned realms which have very little to do with the complexity of real contexts."[4] While I agree with Read in his implication that all theater is political, difficulties arise in trying to avoid these terms of reference when dealing with practices that are community based. Particularly given the current connotations of the term *community theater* in Australia, this raises the question of how to reframe an investigation of a type of participatory, nonrepertory, nonamateur but not always fully professional performance practice that aims to have some political and community efficacy. Where do I begin when the goalposts are continually shifting?

These are just some of the dilemmas involved in tackling the "art form formerly known as" community theater in Australia. The attempt to negotiate a site for performance that is moving beyond a once gloried past is fraught with melancholic self-examination, reevaluation, and recategorization: is the "art form formerly known as" community theater still valid in the 1990s? Is it even worth posing the question?

My answer is a resounding, but carefully qualified, yes on both counts. To evoke the postmodern once again, if community really is a nonstatic, continually evolving process of relations (as those few who are working innovatively in the field believe), surely self-questioning, reevaluation, and

general gloom mongering are the essential stepping stones for negotiating a site for performance that defies static categorization.

My aim in this essay is to highlight regenerative approaches to community theater that are emerging from this process of questioning and reevaluation. But there are two catches. One, the practice is not termed *community theater* anymore. And, two, despite its tenuous position as "community cultural development" in government cultural policy, this body of work is no longer afraid to be overtly critical of, nor criticized by, its participating community. The Backbone Youth Arts's *Skate Girl Space* project is an example of this "art form formerly known as" community theater, evoking the political function of earlier community-based performance in Australia rather than the term's celebratory connotations. This 1996 youth arts project was a gesture of radical social action reminiscent of the political performance that defined the term *community theater* twenty years ago, regenerated with a contemporary feminist attitude that demanded community-based solidarity and action while disrupting, on a number of levels, the very notion of community itself. While acknowledging major tensions and further political repercussions (manifest in the violent reaction of some spectators to the performance), I suggest that the project is an example of an important regeneration of community-based performance that refuses a routine sense of celebration and thus functions without the safety gear of conventional community arts practice.

By describing the project as "youth arts," I am cautious. Like the terms *community arts* and *community cultural development,* it is slippery terminology. The category youth has been variously described as rebellious, antiauthoritarian, deeply conservative, at the forefront of social change; under twenty-five, under thirty-five, "the young at heart." Across the category there are also distinctions of gender, race, sexuality, class, ability, education, and locality. So, when coupled with the equally diverse and pliable concepts of arts and culture, the result is a heady mix of confusing and stereotypical images of "youth cultures": raves, skateboards, religious rallies, cyber-realities, crime, drugs, fashion, girl guides, and sole parenthood, to name a few. Add to this the retro-perspective of adults surveying the under twenty-fives, and these images are sometimes further framed by nostalgia or fear.

Vered Amit-Talai refers to a particular anthropological problem arising out of "the tendency to identify cultures with community."[5] She observes that "within such a perspective, the very concept of youth culture becomes for all intents and purposes untenable unless we can assert that youths form their own separate societies."[6] To address this, Amit-Talai proposes an

activity-oriented view of culture that presumes that "youthful cultural strategies [diverse as they are] will emerge from and be addressed to the exigencies of the situations in which they are implicated and the constraints which age restrictions impose on the range and nature of that involvement."[7] This allows the view that "youth is peculiar in status, expectations and involvement,"[8] without assuming any ageist, limiting, or essentializing notion of a youth culture or of youth. So, too, Johanna Wyn and Rob White describe youth cultural activity as a constant dynamic process, "not only in the sense of different and rapidly changing influences in one's cultural universe, but as well, with respect to the levels of participation by young people in actively constructing their cultural life."[9] It is on the basis of these activity-centered understandings that I use the terms *youth arts* and *youth cultures* in the following discussion.

In the early 1990s Brisbane-based La Boite Youth Theatre evolved into Backbone Youth Arts due to a recognition that theater, in the narrowly defined traditional sense of the word, was not a significantly meaningful "youthful cultural strategy" for most young people. Informed by Paul Willis's concept of a "grounded aesthetics,"[10] Backbone Youth Arts and a number of other former youth theaters around the country have expanded their work beyond conventional theater skills workshops to promote and encourage young people's own preferences in cultural activity and performance. For Backbone Youth Arts this transition has thematically focused on young people's experience as critical consumers in their everyday life; whereby a critical examination of the media and advertising industry's processes of production (particularly their representations of age, gender, and cultural difference) has informed the young participants' devising of contemporary performance. In all Backbone projects young people are positioned as the primary creators and artists, often working in conjunction with established arts workers.

A participant-managed performance group of young women has developed as part of Backbone Youth Arts' program. This group, called the Hereford Sisters, began in 1993 with the aim of encouraging young women's diversity, creativity, and cultures through physical performance and movement. Managed by a fluid membership of young women and facilitated by Backbone Youth Arts' artistic director, Louise Hollingworth, the Hereford Sisters process provides "a means for young women to occupy . . . decision-making positions of management and control"[11] in the arts industry. Following a number of performance projects exploring topics such

as eating behaviors, romance, and safety, the members of the Hereford Sisters consciously shifted their issue-based focus beyond the conceptual space of the private to the public with the 1996 *Skate Girl Space* project.

Skate Girl Space centered on young women's relationship to public space, particularly in inner-city Brisbane. Funded by the local Brisbane City Council and sponsored by various skateboard companies, *Skate Girl Space* initially emerged from young women's requests to develop skateboarding skills in an arts framework. From there it evolved as an opportunity to express their concern about access to the heavily male-dominated territory of public outdoor parks. The project then became a major component of the expansive Girls in Space arts and cultural action research program, which later involved Backbone and four other organizations in identifying and promoting young women's public space needs in Brisbane.

The *Skate Girl Space* project both utilized and challenged contemporary youth cultures such as skateboarding in a six-month workshop and devising process. The members of the Hereford Sisters researched and comanaged the process, with Louise Hollingworth and dramaturg, Louise Gough, and participated in skateboarding and physical theater workshops to hone their skills in performance.

A narrative that parodied the vernacular of commercial skateboarding culture and the genre of the American western resulted. Titled an action plan, the script for the project's culminating performance event was structured more like a film treatment than any theater script: each scene identified in relation to a specific context, task, and tension.

SCENE 1

CONTEXT: Heroes (the performers) have been told this was a free tradin' town. They arrive to find it is inhabited and constructed. They explore this weird place cautiously.

TASK: Establish relationship between heroes/villain/society.

TENSION: From the heroes perspective the relationships are not as they expected.[12]

Focused on themes of territory and belonging in both form and content, the performance incorporated video images that critiqued prevalent commercial skate culture attitudes toward women, people with low levels of skateboarding skill, sacrosanct "peak traffic times," and skate fashion. These images, in conjunction with the performance narrative, sought to respond to skate culture as a mode of cultural consumption and social identification through comic exaggeration and extension. The performance

employed the tropes of the American TV western to make ironic the idea of spatial frontiers and territorial conquests in the skate space. The performers decided to foreground their physical presence in the site-specific setting by utilizing a "parodic self-consciousness"[13] in costuming: fusing dance party and glam fashion with American western boots and fringes and, in so doing, overcoding a girlish stereotype. In this way their highly visual presence in the space commented on the prescriptive behavior of those who dominated the space. The issues and the gender formerly invisible in this space thus became extraordinarily visible and political.

Leading up to the performance event at the Paddington Skate Park, the thirteen-member Hereford Sisters team developed their basic skateboarding skills at night because, as unskilled riders, they were unable to access this public space during daylight hours due to the "heavy traffic" of skateboarding regulars. Throughout the process Louise Hollingworth consulted with the Paddington Skate Park Committee, a group of young men who voluntarily maintained this popular skateboarding site in Brisbane's inner city, and made special arrangements to gain access to the site on the day of the *Skate Girl Space* event for a technical run.[14] Despite this consultation, the performers experienced sexual harassment and physical and verbal abuse from a number of regular park users, to an extent that necessitated a police presence during the final rehearsal. As a precursor to what was to be a very tense event, the Hereford Sisters became acutely aware that this public space was exclusively male expert skaters' territory.

The early evening event featured large-screen video projection and a live "all-girl cow-poke" band set among Paddington Skate Park's skate ramps and bowls, the unique features of the park making an innovative performative landscape for the young Hereford artists and their audience. Dressed in their colorful mismatched gear, complete with the odd ten-gallon hat, the performance opened with the Hereford Sisters entering the park space as a skateboard-toting posse ready to explore and pioneer new territory. Placed firmly in the physical theater realm, the performers engaged in a feminist "doing" of performance, merging skateboarding and physical and comic skills in sequences, such as a "tick-tack skateboard tap," to confront the physical space and the dominant "law/lore" as expressed by the electronic image of authority, Sheriff Stiffy.

The audience was supposed to move around the space simultaneously with the performers as they explored the park, assessing the situation and constructing strategies for defiant occupation. But the day's earlier disruptions undermined the event's production values and impacted the performers' attitude to their spectators. The inability to stage an adequate technical

run prior to the performance contributed to the failure of the outdoor sound system, so that the bewildered audience of five hundred had only the performers' visual coding and the singularly clear voice (ironically, that of the male Sheriff Stiffy) to make meaning of the haphazard goings-on. To make matters worse, a core of intoxicated male skaters and female companions also heckled the performers, at one point interrupting the production altogether by throwing a glass beer bottle onto the stage area.[15] Consequently, the narrative's clever "ramp thwackin', whip crackin', side splittin'"[16] conceptual and language play was largely lost on an audience whose members were left to assume mistakenly that this performance was essentially about girls-as-goodies versus boys-as-baddies. Although the piece was attempting to articulate the diversity of community and expose the power structures operating within the construction of regional and age-specific ideas of community, these aspects of the event contributed to a far more antagonistic treatment of the issues at hand. As the *Skate Girl Space* program prophetically stated,

> Anticipating free tradin' space they discover all is not as it appears. . . . [T]his town is inhabited and has its ways. The unwritten lore is articulated when they meet face to face with Sheriff Stiffy. Stiffy acts as the mouth piece for BIG BAD BEEF's code of operation [BIG BAD BEEF being the space personified]. The scent of a SHOWDOWN wafts in the breeze.[17]

The performance narrative was intentionally left open-ended with a playful finale featuring live-to-screen video footage of the hero-performers "riding off into the sunset" (to cross at traffic lights on the street adjacent to the skate park). As young women denied equitable access to the realm of public space, these final images may have represented a return to the private gendered space of home and bedroom; that is, if it weren't for the deliberately defiant "in your face" attitude expressed directly, by each departing performer into the face of the live-to-screen camera. In this quick, aggressive succession of close-up facials, these young women were declaring that they would be back and would not be ignored. After the finale most of the crowd lingered in the space bemused. The hecklers—themselves resistant to this "performance of resistance"—continued to disrupt proceedings by physically scuffling with the remaining Hereford Sisters, again necessitating an intervention by police.

A far cry from celebratory community theater, the performance had

Publicity photo for *Skate Girl Space* by Hereford Sisters. Hereford Sisters, *from left to right:* Jacki McKean, Kellie McBride, Melissa Fox, Leanne Sales (*at far back*), Marion Woodhead, Zoe Green (*scooter*), Freya Dwyer. Photograph courtesy of Rebecca Harbison. (Backbone Youth Arts Inc.)

many detractors. What right did these women have to waltz (at times literally) in a culturally specific space, to declare a showdown with the young men who regularly used it? Haven't young men themselves been marginalized in their access to appropriate public space facilities? How were other skateboarders expected to react to the perceived generalizations made about male skateboarders? If the project aimed to get girls skating in Paddington, why didn't they practice elsewhere to hone their skills, just like everyone else?

These are valid questions that, to effect long-term community development, were later addressed by young women and men together in Paddington. To avoid the violence, critics of the process suggested that the entire project should have been more of a collaboration than a liaison with the young male skaters who used the space. Yet this leads to questions about the very purpose of community-based performance. Whose community are we talking about? Whose voice and representation are we talking about? Who is the public of *public space?* And what does this say about the concept of community?

The *Skate Girl Space* project was regenerative as community-based performance for its bold enactment and interrogation of community on a number of levels. While "celebratory epic" models of community theater attempt to achieve community cohesion—sometimes by celebrating diversity, sometimes by responding as community to adversity—*Skate Girl Space* provoked, agitated, and disrupted community to enable community action.

First, on a philosophical level this government-supported project enacted and interrogated the principles of community cultural development, cited by Fiona Winning as "Diversity, Access and Participation."[18] *Skate Girl Space* aimed to empower young women to access and self-manage processes of cultural production. This was facilitated by the experienced Backbone Youth Arts director and further guided by the narrative- and performance-shaping skills of the dramaturg, Louise Gough. The skate expert, video artist, musicians, and physical theater workers who facilitated the process also supported the young participants' skills development, enabling a process of community expression through performance to occur. On this level the project demanded local government attention to the fact that young women were invisible in the current discourse and provision of public space. In the tradition of earlier political Australian community theater, the project was an opportunity for a previously disempowered and marginalized group of people to enact community to effect social change. By physically occupying the Paddington Skate Park, which few women had traversed, and by satirizing the idea of territory, frontiers, and unwritten lore, the young women of *Skate Girl Space* resisted and challenged the assumptions about public space as community space. They delivered a clear message about the inequity of public space use and provision and the reliance on essentialized notions of "the public." Their performance also demonstrated that the idealized notion of "free access" operates as much in the cultural and social realms as in the purely economic, an aspect overlooked in the use and provision of "free" public space.

Second, the project both regenerated and challenged perceptions of age-specific community. This age-defined community context was reflected in the fact that Backbone Youth Arts, as host organization, was a youth-specific company and worked with other youth-focused organizations to support young people's own "youthful cultural strategies." Yet, on this level, *Skate Girl Space* also challenged the assumption that youth constitute a community of common interest, particularly as consumers of commercial culture. For example, as part of the performance-devising process, the participants of *Skate Girl Space* examined the commercial culture of skateboarding and its sexist representations of women as passive fashion

objects. During their research the Hereford Sisters found it almost impossible to locate images of women actively skating in any of the current issues of the major skateboarding magazines.[19] This effectively debunked the idea that there exists a community of youth, young consumers, or even young skateboarders, resisting and disrupting the idea of an age-defined community with gender-specific perspectives. The performance of *Skate Girl Space* foregrounded this by depicting, on the wide screen, only one male character: a disembodied, electronically mediated, all-seeing, all-authoritarian talking head, Sheriff Stiffy, who laid down the law/lore on what to wear and what not to do as a (presumably male) skateboarder. The use of this omnipresent character also satirized, on a wider scale, the hegemonic systems of power and authority that operate in the media construction of youth in consumerist late-capitalist societies.

Third, the project was site specific and both engaged and provoked a regionally based community. At the time of the project the resources of Backbone Youth Arts were centered in inner-city Paddington, and Louise Hollingworth initiated ongoing consultation and coordination with community groups in the same region. At the same time, as a site-specific project in public space, *Skate Girl Space* resisted the ideals of regional community cohesiveness and shared living space and questioned the concept of value-free recreation. Inequities of public space provision were exposed in the process, revealing an erroneous assumption on the part of local government authorities that community is a regionally specific given with common recreational and cultural needs that can be universally met by conventional public facilities.

There is no doubt the *Skate Girl Space* performance event was disturbing. The disruptions that occurred were a very public manifestation of overlapping tensions among the gendered, age-specific, and regional communities involved. In the short term the event may have further limited young women's access to the Paddington Skate Park—the public space of their regional community. But, far more important, *Skate Girl Space* was a politically radical gesture from a group of young women critical of a sexist commercial culture that colonizes so-called public space with unwritten lore, critical of the invisibility of young women within debates about public space, and critical of unnecessary resort to violence.

While this performative action could be interpreted as political in itself, the reactions of the spectators to the event also made it politically perilous. Carlson states that "the central concern of resistant performance arises from the dangerous game it plays as a double agent, recognizing that in the post-

modern world complicity and subversion are inextricably intertwined."[20] Carlson suggests that this "double operation"[21] may sometimes merely reinforce stereotypes, risking an essentialized us/them approach to domination and subversion. The Hereford Sisters' flouting of skate lore and their lack of high-level skateboarding skill, for which the inner-city skate park is renowned, punted on this hazardous game: the resultant dynamic among performers, spectators, and police almost countersubverting the project. While this danger was well acknowledged by the event's coordinators who, with the Hereford Sisters, had planned specific strategies to deal with the potentially violent situation,[22] their aim was to create a new space not only for "girl" skaters but for others denied access in the public and community realm.

A highly potent aspect of the Hereford Sisters' work was their commitment to the subversive and parodic self-consciousness of their political "double-coding." This "doing" functioned neither as a whole community celebration nor solely as a resistance against hegemonic forces. The performers were not resisting the act of skateboarding itself, for they themselves were doing it. They were not resisting or denying the right to develop and perform high-level skill, for they themselves were parodying their own lack of skill and were seeking out the unspoken rules pertaining to the display of such skill. Rather, their performance aimed to expose disempowering representational processes and the lack of access and opportunity that occurs when community and community space are dominated by particular interest groups that codify the space with highly discriminatory and exclusionary politics. The tensions that did arise indicated that *Skate Girl Space* was indeed a timely and relevant call for recognition and action.

Thus, *Skate Girl Space* was both a process of participatory community-based cultural production and a feminist commentary on dominant modes of cultural production and consumption in public space. It functioned as a politically charged message about the inequitable opportunities for young women to claim and share cultural space. Significantly, these strategies have a history that highlights the symbiotic relationship between feminist and community-based approaches to political performance practice in Australia.[23]

Currently, arts funding bodies and those responsible for the management of public outdoor spaces are besotted with the equation: *community-based arts activity plus young people (in public space) equals good community crime prevention*. But issues of public space and youth arts are more complex than that. By problematizing these recreation issues with questions of "whose space?" and "who is the public anyway?," *Skate Girl Space* facilitated young people's expression on a wider range of interrelated cultural issues, such as

marginalization, identity, gender, access, and diversity. This was evident not only in the performance narrative but also in the spectators' responses (violent and otherwise) and in the community and media debate that followed the event, thus regenerating the principles of effective community theater for social change. If *Skate Girl Space* was a dissatisfying performance, this was because it became recontextualized by the very issues it set out to address and not because it wasn't celebratory or professional or didn't meet the mythical criteria for "excellent" cultural product at the behest of funding bodies. The Hereford Sisters and Backbone Youth Arts showed that, while the term *community* arguably becomes less useful in increasingly diverse and electronically mediated societies, the function of community-based performance does not. People coming together for an amount of time to participate in the expression of their common experience or concerns and to interrogate further the assumptions placed on regional, age-based, gender-specific, and commercially defined communities is an important political exercise.

In 1997 the Hereford Sisters embarked on a follow-up project, Risk8 Theatre, using the idea of positive negotiation of risk as a focus for their work. In particular, the troupe aimed to "negotiate daredevil tricks with a board in space + physical theatre" to create a "new performance language."[24] This approach is indicative of a wider shift in the uses of space, body, and language in youth-specific performance in Australia, perhaps also generating a revamped aesthetics of community-based performance. For the Hereford Sisters a continuing parallel investigation of consumer cultures, particularly the power relationships that operate within them, is leading to innovative intersections of form and content, an emerging signature feature of their work being the fusion of video art with physical theater in live performance.

Gay Hawkins has described how community arts in Australia negotiated a place in cultural policy by defining itself as oppositional to perceived elite culture, on the one hand, and mass-mediated culture, on the other—the result being an overvalorization of context over content.[25] Yet, by developing out of young people's diverse interests, needs, and preferred cultural processes, organizations like Backbone Youth Arts *question* context *through* content and generate new processes (and content) in doing so. In this type of community-based performance, context and content inform, challenge, and create each other in much the same way as a contemporary "genre of feminist theater" conflates form and content for political effect.[26] This provides the framework for serious, engaging, and sometimes dangerous arts

practices to occur, one in which political efficacy and cultural value are inextricably linked.

In *Cultural Studies and Cultural Value* John Frow examines the dilemmas associated with making value judgments within and between what he terms "regimes of cultural value."[27] What is unique and important about the participatory community-based performance of Backbone Youth Arts and other politically effective youth arts and community cultural organizations is their recognition that many regimes of value operate integratively across the field. They refuse to be constrained by a singular regime of value or models of practice predetermined by government funding agencies' agendas for community cultural development. To ask honestly of community-based performance, "the ethical and political questions—who speaks? Who speaks for whom? Whose voice is listened to, whose voice is spoken over, who has no voice?"[28] is to risk creating more division than celebration—particularly when diversity within so-called community is at issue. It is only by acknowledging the nature of community cultural development work—its processual approach and its span across cultural and social regimes of value—that this division can lead to positive social action. This poses a direct challenge to policy makers and to the arts industry primarily concerned with categorization of arts industry sectors.

Perhaps it has been the case that, in fighting for a place in cultural policy and the cultural industry, community theater in Australia has tried valiantly to create a singularly appropriate regime of cultural value, one that offers criteria for evaluation and benchmarks for development. Yet I believe that the strength of community-based performance lies in the way it intersects with a range of regimes of value and thereby defies categorization. *Skate Girl Space* illustrates how this intersection can sometimes result in collision and confrontation and yet make for effective community cultural development. Far from being dead, the "art form formerly known as" community theater continues, transformed in different sites and contexts to effect social change.

NOTES

1. Geoffrey Milne, "Wanted (Presumed Dead): Community Theatre in Victoria," *Australasian Drama Studies* 23 (1993): 147–60.

2. For general discussions about community theater in Australia, particularly its links with government policy, see ibid.; and Richard Fotheringham, ed., *Community Theatre in Australia,* rev. ed. (Sydney: Currency, 1992); Gay Hawkins, *From Nimbin to Mardi Gras: Constructing Community Arts* (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1993); David Watt, "Community Theatre: A Progress Report," *Australasian Drama Studies* 20 (1992): 3–15; David Watt, "'Excellence/Access' and 'Nation/Community,'" *Canadian Theatre Review* 74 (1993): 7–11; Fiona Winning, "Cultural Policy and Community Theatre," *Australasian Drama Studies* 22 (1993): 73–78.

3. Watt, "'Excellence/Access,'" 9.

4. Alan Read, *Theatre and Everyday Life: An Ethics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 1.

5. Vered Amit-Talai, "The 'Multi' Cultural of Youth," in *Youth Cultures: A Cross Cultural Perspective,* ed. Vered Amit-Talai and Helena Wulff (London: Routledge, 1995), 224.

6. Ibid., 224.

7. Ibid., 231.

8. Ibid.

9. Johanna Wyn and Rob White, *Rethinking Youth* (St. Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1997), 85.

10. Paul Willis, *Moving Culture: An Enquiry into the Cultural Activities of Young People* (London: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1990), 14.

11. Julia Postle, "Accessing the Performing Body," *Real Time* 12 (1996): 33.

12. Backbone Youth Arts and Louise Gough, "Skate Girl Space Action Plan," MS. First performed as *Skate Girl Space* at Paddington Skate Park, Brisbane, 13 October 1996. Dramaturg: Louise Gough; director: Louise Hollingworth; associate director: Gillian Gardiner; video artist: Rebecca Harbison; associate video artist: Ayesha Muthalib; promotions: Eimear Quinn; "Sk8" facilitator: Hap Hathaway; physical theater facilitator: Sara Ritchie; costume construction: Karen Blinco; production manager: Denbi Newton; Hereford Sisters performers: Carolanne Sampson-Beechley, Zoe Robinson, Claire Mannion, Leah-Jett Pellinkhof, Tamara Miller, Marion Woodhead, Leanne Sales, Kellie McBride, Freya Dwyer, Zoe Greenhalgh, Roxanne, Jacki McKean, and Melissa Fox; Sheriff Stiffy: Jean-Marc Russ.

13. Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1996), 175.

14. Louise Hollingworth, personal interview, 18 October 1996.

15. The event was publicized as a drug-free and alcohol-free event, and there were no refreshments on sale.

16. Hereford Sisters, *Skate Girl Space Program* (Brisbane: Backbone Youth Arts, 1996), n.p.

17. Ibid., n.p.

18. Winning, "Cultural Policy," 74.

19. Louise Hollingworth, "Skate Girl Space," workshop, Youth Arts Queensland Artex Conference, Brisbane, 19 July 1996.

20. Carlson, *Performance,* 173.

21. Ibid., 173.

22. Hollingworth interview.

23. Feminists' leading roles in the development of community-based performance are evident in the influential work of women's theater groups such as Vital Statistix and Home Cooking Company, particularly during the 1980s, and the ongoing work of directors such as Fiona Winning, formerly of Death Defying Theatre, and Theresa Crea, of Doppio Teatro. While references to community-based performance are common in

studies of feminist theater practice (in particular the work of Peta Tait), reciprocal acknowledgment of feminists' contribution to the development of community-based approaches is yet cursory. Perhaps this is due to the fear of limiting the perception of "the art form formerly known as" as a prescriptively gendered practice?

24. Freya Dwyer, "1997 Boundary Busting Initiative," *A Moo Zine* (December 1996): 17.

25. Hawkins, *From Nimbin to Mardi Gras,* 163.

26. Peta Tait, *Converging Realities: Feminism in Australian Theatre* (Sydney: Currency; Melbourne: Artmoves, 1994), 2.

27. John Frow, *Cultural Studies and Cultural Value* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 151.

28. Ibid., 161.

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